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Testimony of the American Lung Association in Connecticut in Support of Raised Senate Bill No. 245, An Act Prohibiting Smoking in Public Places

March 1, 2010

Public Health Committee
Room 3000, Legislative Office Building
Hartford, CT 06106

Dear Senator Harris, Representative Ritter and Members of the Public Health Committee:

I appreciate the opportunity to speak in strong support of Raised Bill No. 245, An Act Prohibiting Smoking in Public Places. My name is Dawn Mays-Hardy and I serve as the Connecticut Director of Health Promotion and Public Policy for the American Lung Association.

Our reasons for supporting this bill are simple. First and foremost, a smoke-free work environment should not depend on the number employees exposed, each life is important. By passing this proposal you will provide protection from secondhand smoke, a known cause of cancer, to more than 75,000 people who work in businesses with fewer than four employees in our state. In addition, the Surgeon General report indicates a workplace free of environmental tobacco smoke promotes a healthier workforce, protects employees and patrons from second hand smoke exposure, reduces health, life, disability and fire insurance costs, to name a few.

The medical and economic costs of delayed action on this bill negatively impacts nonsmokers as well as smokers. Nonsmokers will be unnecessarily and involuntarily exposed to carcinogens increasing their chances of developing respiratory illnesses, heart attacks and increased risk of developing cancer by 20-30%. No one should be involuntarily exposed to a cancer causing substance in order to earn a living. Small business is the backbone of our economy. Workers in our small businesses need and deserve the protection this bill assures.

While the proposal is not designed to force smokers to quit, years of research have demonstrated that when worksites are smoke free, more employees at that workplace quit smoking. This makes sense since over 70% of smokers report wanting to quit. Providing a smoke free workplace is a significant motivator to help smokers be successful quitters.

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We value your deep commitment to advancing strong policies that protect workers' health and urge you to support Raised Bill No. 245 promoting smoke free workplaces in Connecticut. Again, thank you for this opportunity.

Dawn Mays-Hardy, MS
CT Director Health Promotion and Public Policy
American Lung Association in Connecticut